

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 22,2015 **Meeting No.:** 198

Project: 700 S. Eden Street/ BCI Lot **Phase:** Introduction

Location: 700 S. Eden Street – Harbor East

PRESENTATION:

Mr. Jeff Kayce, Vice President of Bozzuto Development, introduced the project and the development team. Mr. Michael Hickok, partner with Hickock Cole Architects, identified the major program components of the project. They include a 65,000 square foot food market, a 575 space parking garage, a 49 unit condominium component along Lancaster Street and a 292 unit apartment tower positioned on the north east corner of the site. Mr. Hickok presented a series of conceptual floor plans and massing sketches which highlighted both the challenges and opportunities of the program and site.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE PANEL:

The Panel welcomed the Developers' continued investment in the downtown and acknowledged their record of implementing quality urban projects. The Panel appreciated the Architect's enthusiasm for the project and willingness to share initial design concepts prior to a formal schematic design presentation. Recognizing that the Architect's sketches represented the early stages of the design process, the Panel did express a note of caution on the proposed design direction and identified several urban design concerns:

SITE CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCERNS:

- Coordinate with the Department of Transportation and the Planning Department to ensure a seamless integration of streetscape improvements along the east side of the 700 block of S. Central Avenue in concert with the planned improvements for the entire S. Central corridor.
- Coordinate with the Planning Department and other regulatory agencies to determine the impact of the proposed Central Avenue bridge to Harbor Point and proposed changes to the flood plain as they may determine both sidewalk and ground floor grade elevations. Graphically illustrate, in plan, the proposed bridge connection and specify grades, sidewalk dimensions, crosswalks and streetscape treatment at the intersection of S. Central and Lancaster.

- Illustrate with a site plan the proposed and existing streetscape treatment for all adjacent urban blocks so the Panel has a full understanding of the interface and continuity of the proposed Harbor East project within the surrounding context. Provide more detailed illustration of the location and cadence of trees along all four streets defining the development parcel.
- Continue to study the location and impact of all vehicular service and access points concentrated along the west side of the Eden Street block, as the Panel felt this concentration would create a hostile pedestrian environment. The Panel expressed major concerns about the location of four truck service docks (approximately 85 feet in length), opposite the main entry to the large residential project on the east side of the block.
- Continue to study the location and impact of four elevators and a stair tower along the highly visible Central Avenue façade. The Panel questioned whether any “artistic” treatment of this blank wall (approximately 60 feet wide and 94 feet tall) would disguise the problem.
- Continue to study the location of the food market main customer entry at the corner of Central Avenue and Lancaster Street given the proposed width of sidewalks and the anticipated intensity of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic at this intersection. The Panel expressed concern that the proposed width of the Central Avenue sidewalk, in some instances as narrow as ten feet; did not have the ability/capacity to accommodate both foot traffic and street trees.

MASSING CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCERNS:

- Provide a more detailed aerial plan of the adjacent buildings identifying existing and proposed building heights, particularly those buildings and blocks to the north and east of the proposed development. The Panel expressed concern about the proposed 280 feet height of the residential tower when adjacent new development ranges in height from 80 feet to 150 feet.
- Although appreciative of the imagery of the sail boat, the Panel questioned from an urban design point, the desirability of creating an undulating curved wall with deep vertical recesses and large projected balconies. It was felt that Lancaster Street requires a strong continuous and “visually calming” street wall. Additionally, it was expressed that the relationship of the linear nature of the food market storefront with the articulated elements above was unresolved. The Panel encouraged further study.
- Acknowledging that different architectural expressions for the mid rise condominium component and the residential high rise may have merit; the Panel urged the Design Team to view the entire project “holistically”, creating a visual unity of composition as opposed to a collection of desperate elements.

- The Panel felt that the Architect’s instinct to treat the west and northwest corner of the garage façade differently from the other garage facades has merit given the fact that the tower is set back from the west face and north west corner. The Panel did express concern about the treatment of the northeast corner and east façade of the garage and expressed a strong belief that these facades need to be fully integrated into the architecture of the residential tower above. Additional study is needed for the treatment of the garage base as it defines three of the “street walls” of the project.
- The Panel expressed the importance of all four urban corners of the project to mediate the transition from one façade to the next. Of particular note was the southeast corner. The assertive glass tower at this corner, rising approximately 190 feet in height, appeared to the Panel to have little relationship or integration with the undulating curve facades along Lancaster Street or the garage façade along Eden Street. It was felt that these isolated expressive gestures lead to an impression of a composition lacking visual clarity or unity.

PANEL ACTION:

Introduction meeting; no action is required. The Panel looks forward to the continued development and refinements in the design of the Harbor East project.

Attendance:

Yulia Beltikova, Jason Ovalle, Laurence Caudle, Michael Hickok – Hickok Cole Architects
Jason Huss – Harbor East
Caroline Hecker, Stanley Fine – RMG
Jeff Kayce – Bozzuto
Brian Greenan – BDC

Messrs. Bowden, Haresign, Rubin, and Burns* - UDARP Panel

Director Tom Stosur, Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa, Kristin Baja – Planning Dept